



Situation update

Hantavirus infection reported on cruise ship in the Atlantic

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Summary

On 2 May 2026, a cluster of severe respiratory illness onboard a cruise ship in the Atlantic Ocean was reported to the World Health Organization (WHO). As of 13 May, a total of 11 cases, including three deaths (case fatality ratio 27%), have been reported by the WHO.¹ The virus has been identified as Andes virus (ANDV).² Given the incubation period for ANDV, it is not unexpected that additional cases may be reported among exposed individuals.

The WHO continues to assess the risk to the global population from this event as low. The Australian Centre for Disease Control (Australian CDC) is working closely with WHO, other government agencies and state authorities that are coordinating the transport, arrival, health and quarantine arrangements for those passengers returning to Australia.

CDC situation reassessment plan

- The risk to human health in Australia from hantavirus remains low.
- The Australia CDC will continue to monitor the situation internationally and domestically as cruise ship passengers are repatriated.

Relevance to Australia

- The ANDV is part of the broad Hantavirus group, whose primary transmission route is zoonotic (rodent exposure). In rare cases the ANDV can be transmitted from person to person.
 - There is no evidence of transmission from asymptomatic individuals.
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Current situation

Case detection and reporting

- On 2 May, the United Kingdom notified the World Health Organization (WHO) of a cluster of severe respiratory illness board a cruise ship in the Atlantic Ocean.²
- The vessel departed Ushuaia, Argentina, on 1 April 2026 and followed an itinerary across the South Atlantic, with multiple stops in remote and ecologically diverse regions, including mainland Antarctica, South Georgia, Nightingale Island, Tristan da Cunha, Saint Helena, and Ascension Island.³

- The cause of illness was initially unknown but on the same day as the WHO was notified, laboratory testing confirmed hantavirus infection in a critically ill passenger.³
- Subsequently, the ANDV was identified and characterised. The ANDV is part of the broad Hantavirus group and can be transmitted from person to person, noting that primary transmission is zoonotic (rodent exposure).³
- The disease associated with this event is Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS), a rare but serious respiratory illness.
- As of 13 May, a total of 11 cases, including three deaths (case fatality ratio 27%), have been reported by the WHO.¹
- Given the incubation period for ANDV, it is not unexpected that additional cases may be reported among exposed individuals.

Public health response

- The WHO is continuing to manage the hantavirus outbreak response in coordination with affected countries under the International Health Regulations.
- As of 12 May, ANDV is a listed human disease under the Biosecurity (Listed Human Diseases) Determination 2026.

Epidemiology

- In Australia there have been no recorded human cases to date.
 - The incubation period for ANDV ranges from 4 to 42 days with a median of 18 days.
 - There is no evidence of transmission from asymptomatic individuals.
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References

1. World Health Organization (13 May 2026). Live update on hantavirus. Accessed 14-05-2026: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CG06Mv6XpRs>
2. World Health Organization (8 May 2026). Disease Outbreak News. Hantavirus cluster linked to cruise ship travel, Multi-country. Accessed 11-05-2026: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2026-DON600>
3. World Health Organization (4 May 2026). Disease Outbreak News: Hantavirus cluster linked to cruise ship travel, Multi-country. Accessed 07-05-2026: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2026-DON599>